

were rooted in it, have undergone change. Ancient art, too, obeying the mutability of things, only leaves its fossil impression after it has performed its part; and if the real intention of archaeology be the revival of the past, we predict that the attempt will be abortive: it will at most possess the feebleness incident to the imitator. In order to invest it with vitality we must again recall the spirit to the lifeless body, which we conceive to be utterly impossible. This, as all other fashions, must have its day, and clip the wings of progress; weariness, however, will come upon antiquarianism at last, and that spirit which for a time appears to retard, will but perhaps ensure in the end the universal conviction that all our energies must be directed forwards.

In briefly reviewing the various zones or lines of demarcation in society which constitute, in the aggregate, the public, it was found that in the lowest, all the education it receives is the discipline of evil influences, and no demand upon the fine arts emanates from it. From this melancholy condition we passed to consider the working class, in which such rapid advances in education have been made, and whence, there can be little doubt, a demand upon the arts would issue if means were devised for cheapening them by all worthy expedients.

In the next class that came under our consideration, viz., the middle, we found an appreciation of the fine arts very general; the demand which it makes on them is the most considerable of any, yet its extent and character were both limited and lowered, to what it is conceived it might be, were it not for the striving after ostentatious displays.

And lastly, the aristocracy, in which this characteristic also prevailed, and to which may be added, as an aggravation, another of the follies of fashion, we mean the connoisseurship which can only affect to admire and purchase that which is beyond the means of the vulgar, which seems to partake very much of the feelings and consequential air of the schoolboy with his watch, more for show than any need he has of it. We see, then, that in the educated classes a taste for refined pleasures is observed—whether it be vital, or only that they feel they ought, for a similar reason that the waist of the English and the feet of the Chinese women are pinched, may create a doubt in the minds of some, but for our own part we lean to the latter hypothesis, and believe that the general routine of public education, though improved of late, is not, as yet, vital. It is directed more to the burdening of the memory than the development of the rational, and raising the æsthetic faculties.

What does the education in the fine arts amount to, in any class of the community, but to imperfect copying? Principles are, for the most part, quite out of the question; and what more is it than this that the aristocracy receive in particular, that it should assume the legislation of taste for others? There are numbers of the middle classes whose callings must necessitate a greater degree of practical knowledge in the arts.

We have never been able to discover that our great scholastic institutions have been famed for the instructions which they communicate in the arts; why, then, should the nobility assume superiority of judgment in this respect? The course of study which obtains the degree of connoisseur is something like the following:—To have attended, annually, sales of, and to be the purchaser of, old masters, Etruscan vases, Egyptian mummies, and Elizabethan furniture: to have inserted in one or two windows of the mansion, a few pieces of old painted glass, and halfway up its principal staircase may perhaps be seen a little ornamental painting, surrounding medallions or panels by Boucher, immediately over a niche containing a fragment of a Grecian statue on a carved pedestal of the Renaissance. Such are the conditions which render him eligible to committees, which, self-elected, legislate on matters of taste. The artist himself encourages this state of things, by assuming too much of the "Pollonius" bearing. Were the artists boldly to assert the undoubted right which they possess, as the most competent tribunal to legislate in these matters, the system might, in a short time, be crushed.

We should be much amazed if the same folly were exhibited in a parallel case. If a

body of men uneducated as medical practitioners were called together to decide whether a medical man had treated a certain case in a judicious manner, we should not place much confidence in their decision—yet this is exactly the treatment to which the professed artist and the public tamely submit. Most men are supposed to know best what pleases them; and, in so far as these committees are considered the representative parliaments of public taste, we believe them faithful to their purpose. But if, on the other hand, they think they possess the talent to improve the painter, except by improving themselves, it appears very much like the pupil attempting to teach the master. If they knew their true position, and felt the humble spirit of learners, it might be beneficial to all: it would go far towards entertaining the notion of establishing professorships in the universities and great public schools, to which the most able artists would be called to take upon themselves the office of teachers. This would be, we conceive, the true way of raising the standard of taste; and while still responding to the demands of the public, there would be a mutual reaction tending to the advancement of both; as in all other branches of education, the master in raising the critical faculties of the pupil is himself compelled to move forwards, or hazard his title to respect.

In looking back to past ages, we feel that the arts must suffer while society is in a state of transition, broken up as it is into sects, and divided by bitter feelings. We say in looking back, we cast an anxious glance at the unity of feeling which pervaded society, "for (to use the words of a journalist), in the brightest periods of Grecian and Roman history, there was a distinct national life visible. There was an unmistakable national character brought out, educed from a system of training which owed its strength to a unity of faith, of race, and political objects. Society was simply constituted—there were none of the thousand springs of action which split up modern society into such numerous elements. There existed then, naturally, a standard traditional form—to the likeness of which, all good citizens should be moulded.

The whole inner man was to be brought out and developed in this shape. There was one national religion, one national morality,"* of which the artist was the illustrator and expositor. But let it be remembered that we sigh only for the unity of purpose, which we do not doubt there will be again—more powerful, more enlightened, and more lasting. Then will the arts attain their culminating point and be endowed with a new life. What has been said with regard to combined critics calling themselves committees of taste, is equally applicable to the occasional critics of the press—they, most of them, discover to those learned in such matters, that they are but shallow, and require to be taught, rather than to teach; they do no more, as one of the public, than to be expositors of public taste, and the flatterers of their particular friends. Artists are seldom misled by their opinions, directly; but doubtless they are to some extent, through their influence on public judgment.

It is not considered essential by many that he who assumes the authority of critic should have a practical acquaintance with the art he is to control. We believe, however, on the contrary, that in the highest fulfilment of such an office the most eminent artist would perform it best—the only doubt that could be raised is the probability of the effects of prejudice; but both the man of theory, and he who adds practice thereto, are equally liable to the same objection, which, if valid, would totally disqualify them for the censorship.

Freedom from prejudice, then, is absolutely demanded. When this condition is fulfilled, it is obvious that he who, to his perfect knowledge of the laws of the empire adds the constant practical observance of them, is best fitted to preside over it in the character of judge. There is, however, a delicacy of feeling which must prevent an artist, screened or otherwise, from acting in the public capacity of critic on his peers. We have no doubt that incalculable mischief has arisen, that many a young artist and poet has been ruined,

by a few printed lines of a spiteful critic, for they do not possess the charity of mercy; and the variety of ages and temperaments is disregarded, which ought to be intimately known before reproof is administered. The young require a different admonition to the old. The conceited must be humbled—the diffident encouraged—the rash curbed: these are circumstances concerning the reviewed which cannot, for the most part, be known to the journalist. The only remedy that we see against mis-criticism is the panacea—educate—educate;—and we shall conclude this portion of our subject in the words of Burke: "And as for those so called critics, they have generally sought the rules of the arts in the wrong place, they sought it among poems, pictures, engravings, statues, and buildings. But art can never give the rules that make an art."

It would necessarily happen on the principle laid down in the commencement of this essay, and experience must, we think, testify to its truth, that art in the aggregate is the reflection of public taste, having in its various professors the representation of its prevailing ideas and tastes. The various usages of society which have been recently descanted on will, in them, be witnessed in their effects. It is, in fact, the master who is perpetually educating and training the painter, sculptor, and architect, either to pander to its vices, evincing in language eloquently false, the harlotry of genius, or to respond to its more elevated feelings.

It may at first appear paradoxical to denigrate, at the same time, both the artist and the public as masters reciprocally, the one over the other; and perhaps it may be placed in a clearer light by comparing the public to the masters of capital who employ the masters or proficient in any craft to produce. The master of the craft is, although a servant of the former, the possessor of the talent and skill of performance which he adapts in the manner his employer has directed him.

In this portion of our subject which is devoted to the exposition of the injurious tendencies within the profession itself, we cannot do much more than enlarge on some of the points previously discussed, under the forms which they assume in the educational routine to which the artist is subjected, endeavouring to rescue him from the burden of the antique and venerable picture-precedents with which he is oppressed in constructing his ideal theory. It would not, however, be important to notice this, did it not offer an opportunity of attacking a false principle, for it has seldom, we believe, been observed that any theory of the arts thus deduced has ever been vitally productive.

It is as effete as the attempts of the Romanticist poet so admirably described by Strauss, "who endeavours poetically to renew the faded fiction-world of the faith of the middle ages, as the deepest wisdom. The historical periods in which Romanticism and Romantists arise, says he, are those epochs in which an antique of society is placed in opposition to a modern form, which, as yet unprepared and undeveloped, appears in comparison with the developments of the other as merely vegetative."

"At these boundary lines in the history of the world, men in whom feeling and imagination overpower clearness of thought, souls of more warmth than transparency, will ever turn back to antiquity, out of the infidelity, the prosaic state, which they see prevalent about them: they yearn for the world of the old faith, rich in glorious forms and kindly feeling, and they seek to reproduce this for themselves, and, as far as possible, for others. Since, however, they are sons of their own time, they are themselves interpenetrated to a greater degree than they are aware of with the new opposing principle.

Antiquity, as it is resuscitated in them and by them, is no longer the pure primeval antiquity, but one mixed up in various ways with the modern principle. Faith is no longer the genuine spontaneous faith which governs the being in whom it dwells, but a faith to which the being attaches himself arbitrarily and intentionally. The conscience is prevented from seeing the contradiction and falsehood of this state of things, by fantastic clouds of its own weaving. Romanticism is essentially mysticism, and only mystical spirits can be romantists; only the opposition between the old